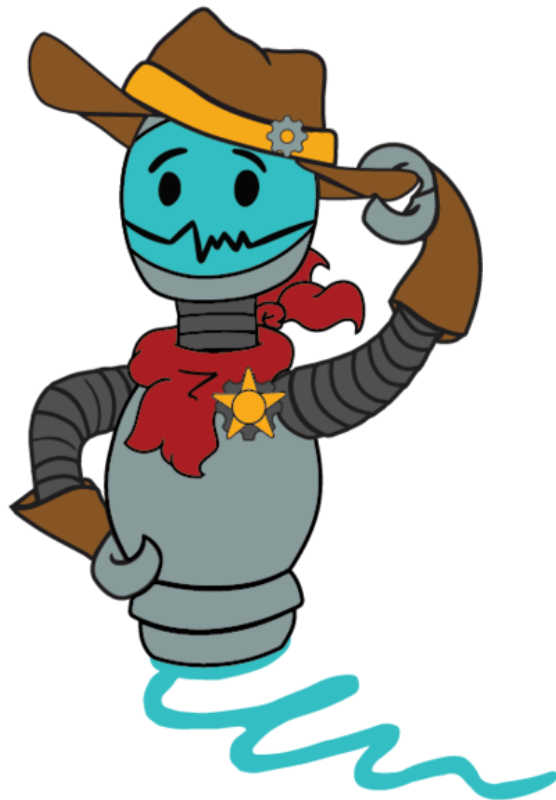


# HOWDY BOTS

FRC Team 6377

## 2025 Sustainability Plan

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## Mission Statement

*The mission of the Howdy Bots is to leverage STEAM and FIRST as a means to provide concrete opportunities for all students to explore their interests, pursue their passions, and develop into successful, happy, and confident adults.*

**“Leveraging STEAM”.** We use STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math), instead of STEM to highlight the artistic and creative aspects of STEM.

**“Concrete Opportunities”.** With our apprenticeship model and low mentor-to-student ratio, all students get the opportunity to acquire skills through hands-on activities.

**“For All Students”.** Our team was founded because of a student who was not eligible to join any other FRC teams in Austin. As a result, we are an open community team focused on working with students who do not have other opportunities to participate in STEAM-related activities.

**“Interest-Driven Learning”.** We encourage students to pursue what *they* are passionate about and discover how to apply their skills. During the off-season, students identify personal interests and goals with a mentor, who works with the student over the season to accomplish those goals.

**“Developing Successful Adults”.** We want our students to go on to be successful and well-rounded adults. We ensure an open, supportive environment that encourages all students to try new ideas and “fail safely.” With high expectations, students learn accountability and self-reliance. Finally, there is an emphasis on teamwork, collaboration, and “winning the right way.”

## Team History & Growth

Our team was founded in 2016 in Austin, Texas, by a motivated homeschooled student who didn't have any local FRC teams available to join. In the seven years since, we have grown significantly in size, competition success, and knowledge. We began with 10 students, and have expanded to 47.

Though we started as a team of homeschoolers, we now serve teenagers from many different educational paths. Our mission as a community team is to provide access to all students who are interested in FRC, regardless of their schooling or background. Up through the 2019 competition season, we were based out of our head mentor's garage, and consequently, limited our team size to 15 members. As our goal was to grow our team size, we saved over \$20,000 across 2018 and 2019 to help fund dedicated shop space, which we moved into in 2020.

Beyond saving for shop space, to ensure our sustainability, we have set aside roughly \$10,000 each year to guarantee ourselves a safety net should we have an unfruitful fundraising season. The last few years, we have leveraged some of this savings to acquire a Haas, Shapeoko, laser, and lathe, greatly expanding the team's in-house manufacturing capabilities, opening up new student learning opportunities, and reducing our reliance on external partners for build season success.

Sustainability of knowledge is just as critical as financial sustainability. To prevent the loss of student knowledge as we grow, we developed a formal skill building curriculum during the pandemic called “Earn Your Spurs.” This includes 18 learning tracks such as CAD, manufacturing and MarComm, each with multiple levels beginning with basics all students should know, to honing deeper experience helping establish the student up as a team leader in the skill area. Senior team members also mentor new team members so that valuable skills and practices are passed down before graduation.

To help students develop new skills during the Summer offseason and to give new students a taste of the competition season, we began the annual “Howdy Bot Rodeo” in 2021. During this miniature build season, the Howdy Bots are divided into teams of 4-5 students, presented with a unique game, and given 6-8 weeks to build a competitive robot. The teams then compete in 2-team alliances during the Rodeo event itself. This challenge forces students to reach outside their comfort zone, taking on multiple responsibilities which encourage them to reach out beyond their normal range of operations.

## **Organizational Structure**

Our team is divided into mechanism groups that each have members in CAD, mechanical, programming, as well as our business Guild which is independent of the mech groups. While our subteams run fairly independently for speed and specialization, collaboration and cross-team communication is emphasized on critical decisions. Meetings begin and end with a team-wide discussion in which individual subteams will voice what they worked on that day and introduce what larger choices need to be made. Our team makes decisions transparently and inclusively. If a decision is mostly relevant to one subteam, the subteam members will weigh each option until they have met consensus and then present it to the team in our closing meeting to get final agreement among everyone. If the decision is extremely important, we discuss it collectively during an opening meeting. For ongoing discussions, we often continue over Slack, our team messaging application. This allows students to collect their thoughts before coming to a consensus. Meeting agendas and notes are all preserved on Google Drive and/or our Slack to track decisions made and actions needed.

Our team has student leaders that help organize and manage what each group will be working on. We employ an apprenticeship model when training; the mentor does an activity while a student watches, then watches the student repeat the activity to ensure comprehension. This creates a stable multi-year cycle, evolving into a student-led operation in which seasoned members become the demonstrator and novices the students. Continuing this practice in the years to come will not only educate new members, but prepare veteran students to be real-world leaders.

Finally, organizational goals, rules, and expectations for students, mentors, and families are codified in the Team Handbook. All new students are expected to read and sign off on the Handbook, providing a solid, consistent foundation for the entire team to operate from.

## **Marketing & Outreach**

Strong branding is important to us because as a relatively young team, we must have a big impact to be memorable. We do this by integrating our brand into all marketing materials, intentionally utilizing social media, and organizing frequent outreach demonstrations in a variety of locations.

Our branding strategy begins with a “standards” document, so that all of our marketing materials (business cards, banners, social media, etc), have a consistent look. At competitions, our pit always has a cowboy theme integrated with the game's theme. For example, in 2018 Power Up, our pit was a western saloon combined with arcade game elements. In 2022 Rapid React, our theme was “Cattle Drive Worldwide.” Additionally, we design a unique badge each year to be laser cut from wood, so it stands out from the traditional circular metal pins, and we wear cowboy hard hats with red bandanas and our brown team shirt at events. These types of regular actions give us more presence and memorability within the community and FRC.

Another way we maintain a strong presence is through intentional social media engagement. We use Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and our website as a bridge to build relationships with fellow teams and express appreciation for our sponsors. To interact with FRC teams, we start conversations, ask questions, or respond to their posts. Even small actions strengthen our personal team presence and relationship with other teams. We appreciate our individual sponsors by posting thank you messages at specific times in which our posts receive maximum attention, such as weekends or during events. Deliberate usage of public platforms increases our recognizability, paving a path for further opportunities.

Some opportunities generated by our reputation are requests for demos. Schools, user groups, technology corporations, and STEM-related events can find and contact us due to our established online presence. This expands our chances to find new sponsors and learning opportunities. For example, attending a SolidWorks user group helped us develop a relationship with GoEngineer, which generated several months of free CAD classes for our students. Additionally, our strong relationship with our sponsor, Integrated Metal Products, has provided students the chance to learn skills such as welding at a professional machine shop. Other events such as our STEM Rodeo Night and going to Farmers Markets allow us to go out into the community to talk about STEM through multiple generations. Circumstances like these create sustainability and roots for our team, and are a result of a reliable reputation and good branding.

## Financial Planning

We are a part of the 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization, ATX Robotics, founded by our original head mentor. As a community team with no school or organizational affiliation, we are responsible for raising 100% of our \$115,000 annual operating budget. We start our budget planning for the season by looking at our budgeted and actual expenses from the previous year. We take input from the subteams about new or updated expenses and make edits based on their input. We brainstorm how we plan to raise money and discuss “non-essential” expenses we could reduce in the event we cannot hit our fundraising goals. The final budget is approved by the ATX Robotics board.

In 2024, we budgeted for revenue of \$114,550 and expenses of \$150,579, expecting a reduction in corporate donations. Over the last six years, our successful fundraising is chiefly driven through an ambitious, annual Telethon. We plan and produce a live fundraising event at our workshop that was modeled after the telethons of old that used to air on TV. The event lasts roughly three hours and is simultaneously streamed on the FIRST Updates Now (FUN) Twitch stream. In addition to interviews with students, the production includes comedic skits, competition videos, and insight into our team and FRC. Our 2025 Telethon raised ~\$16,000 in one afternoon. This has become a unique tool for financial sustainability while also developing the communication and creative skills of our students.

Corporate sponsorships are another critical part of our sustainability. The Howdy Bots educate potential sponsors with a robust sponsor package, and provide a wide range of sponsor benefits (see Appendix C) suitable for donors of all sizes. For our major sponsors, we aim to build deeper relationships by inviting them to “Robot Reveal” events and local competitions, and taking students and the robot out to the sponsor site for show-and-tell events. With one sponsor, Integrated Metal Products, we have developed a particularly strong relationship. Students have been on-site multiple times to learn how to use new tools, get feedback on material choices, and receive help fabricating parts we would not have otherwise have access to.

## Appendix A: Financial Statements

### Fiscal Year 2024 Income Statement & Balance Sheet:

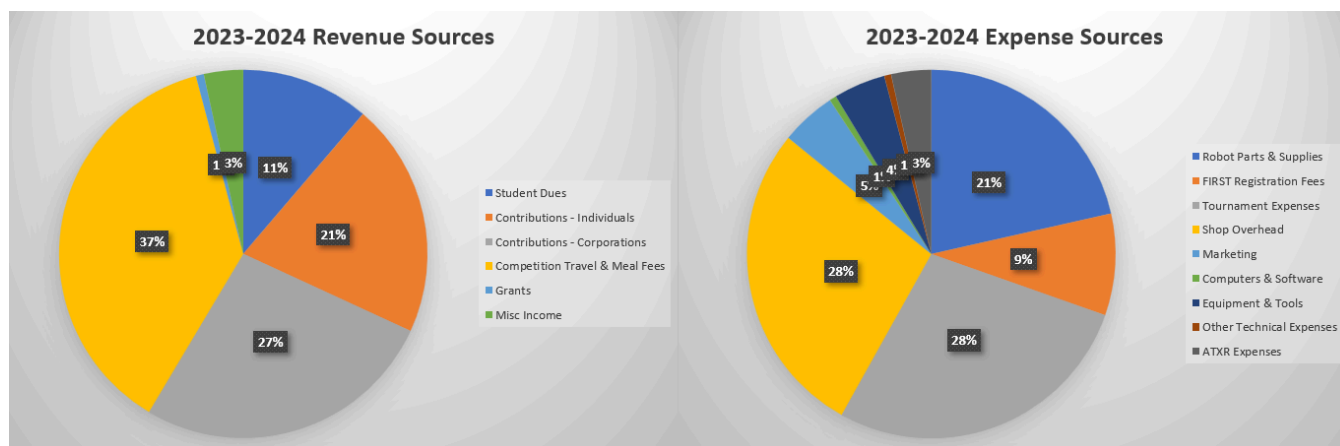
**ATX Robotics, Inc.**  
**Howdy Bots**  
**Balance Sheet**  
**2023-2024**

	FY24 Planned	FY24 Actual	Delta
Student Dues	\$13,500.00	\$16,229.00	(\$2,729.00)
Contributions - Individuals	\$40,000.00	\$29,689.00	\$10,311.00
Contributions - Corporations	\$35,000.00	\$38,445.00	(\$3,445.00)
Competition Travel & Meal Fees	\$46,000.00	\$53,736.00	(\$7,736.00)
Grants	\$20,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$19,000.00
Misc Income	\$2,450.00	\$4,967.00	(\$2,517.00)
<b>Total Revenue:</b>	<b>\$156,950.00</b>	<b>\$144,066.00</b>	<b>\$12,884.00</b>

Expenses:

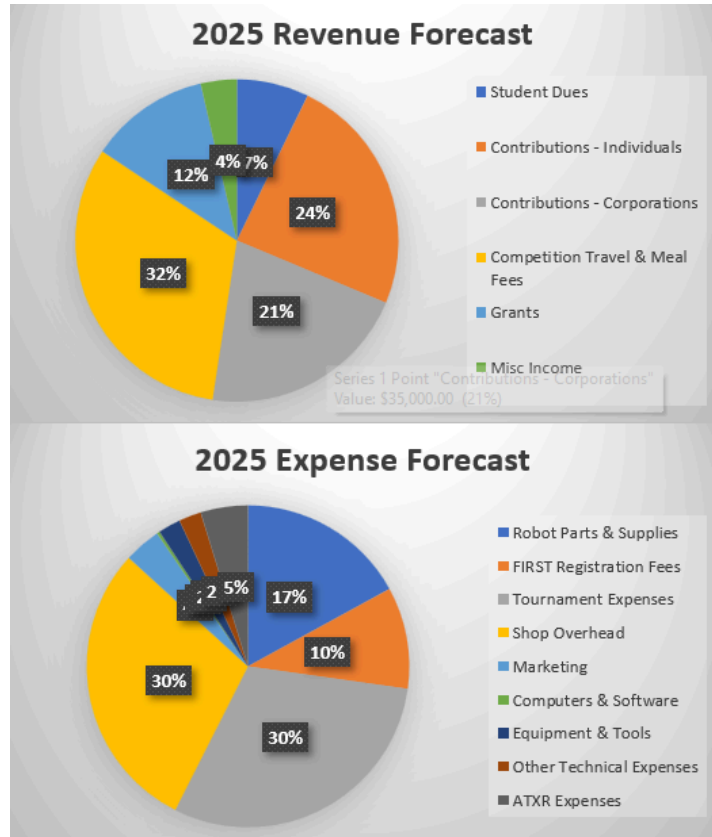
Robot Parts & Supplies	\$25,000.00	\$31,001.00	(\$6,001.00)
FIRST Registration Fees	\$17,000.00	\$12,881.00	\$4,119.00
Tournament Expenses	\$46,200.00	\$40,009.00	\$6,191.00
Shop Overhead	\$47,400.00	\$40,108.00	\$7,292.00
Marketing	\$2,700.00	\$7,019.00	(\$4,319.00)
Computers & Software	\$500.00	\$871.00	(\$371.00)
Equipment & Tools	\$4,000.00	\$6,579.00	(\$2,579.00)
Other Technical Expenses	\$1,000.00	\$870.00	\$130.00
ATXR Expenses	\$1,838.00	\$5,067.00	(\$3,229.00)
<b>Total Expense:</b>	<b>\$145,638.00</b>	<b>\$144,405.00</b>	<b>\$1,233.00</b>

**NET INCOME:** (\$339.00)

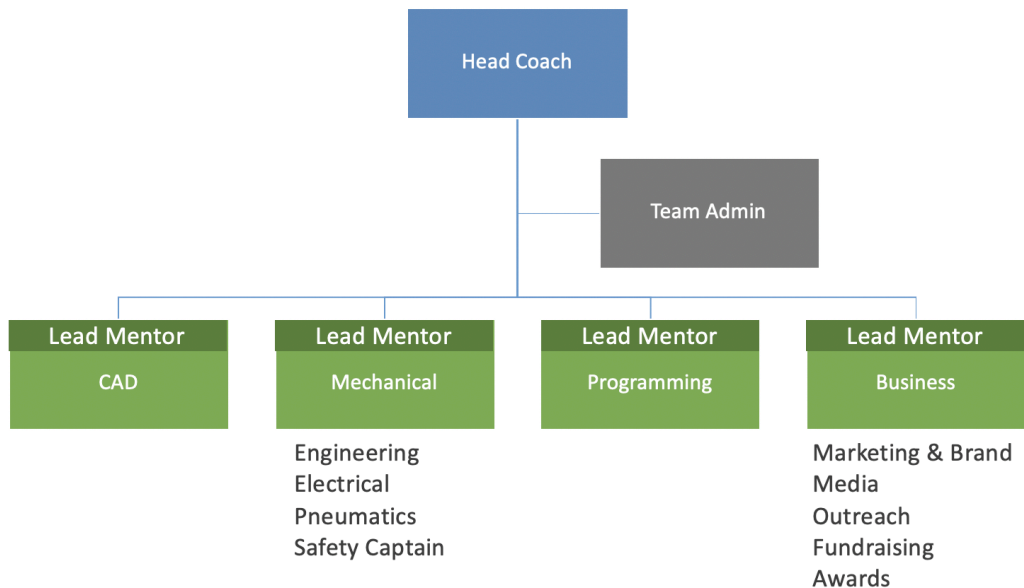


## Fiscal Year 2025 Budget:

<b>ATX Robotics, Inc.</b>	
<b>Howdy Bots</b>	
<b>Revenue and Expense Budget</b>	
<b>2024-2025</b>	
	FY25 Planned
Student Dues	\$12,000.00
Contributions - Individuals	\$40,000.00
Contributions - Corporations	\$35,000.00
Competition Travel & Meal Fees	\$53,000.00
Grants	\$20,000.00
Misc Income	\$6,000.00
<b>Total Revenue:</b>	<b>\$166,000.00</b>
<u>Expenses:</u>	
Robot Parts & Supplies	\$30,000.00
FIRST Registration Fees	\$18,000.00
Tournament Expenses	\$53,200.00
Shop Overhead	\$51,700.00
Marketing	\$6,500.00
Computers & Software	\$500.00
Equipment & Tools	\$4,000.00
Other Technical Expenses	\$3,950.00
ATXR Expenses	\$8,344.50
<b>Total Expense:</b>	<b>\$176,194.50</b>



## Appendix B: Team Organizational Structure





## Appendix C: Sponsor Benefits & Info Package

Tier Name	Greenhorn	Cowboy	Rancher	Deputy	Marshall	Sheriff	"Above the Law"
<b>Donation Range</b>	<b>\$20 - \$99</b>	<b>\$100 - \$499</b>	<b>\$500 - \$1,999</b>	<b>\$2,000 - \$4,999</b>	<b>\$5,000 - \$9,999</b>	<b>\$10,000+</b>	<b>Multi-year commit*</b>
Signed thank-you note & team picture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social media promotion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Logo on website		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Logo on t-shirt			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Logo on pit banner				✓	✓	✓	✓
Love Your Sponsor Day individual promotion				✓	✓	✓	✓
Competition invitation w/ Student Ambassador					✓	✓	✓
Logo on our trailer						✓	✓
Logo on our robot						✓	✓
On-site Robot Reveal & demo						✓	✓
Promotional video suitable for use by your company							✓
More prominent logo placements							✓

